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FOR PRELIMINARY USE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Bureau of Agricultural Economics  
Washington, D. C.

OUTLINE -- WHAT CAN THE RURAL CHURCH DO?

Prepared by O. Ulrey, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, for use at Conference on Land and the Rural Church in the Cumberland Plateau, Scarritt College Rural Center, Crossville, Tennessee, November 27-29, 1945. Conference called by Subcommittee on Land Tenure, Committee on Town and Country, which is constituted jointly by the Home Missions Council of North America, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, and the International Council of Religious Education.

At many recent conferences, the position and problems of the rural church have been analyzed. Many churches and church groups are carrying on constructive programs which involve action in the community. The purposes of this incomplete and experimental outline are to suggest specific activities and to assist in thinking through any church programs which will improve rural living. The outline is divided into two parts, (1) questions on functions and procedure of church group and (2) suggestions for action by the rural church.

We recognize that the primary function of the church is to better the religious and spiritual life of the individual, family, and community. The church, however, may be handicapped unless other agencies and institutions are motivated by Christian principles. Consequently, in order to perform its primary function efficiently, the church is concerned with how people make their living and with how they live. In the past, the church has pioneered in education, welfare, and other community activities. Today, the rural church has a major responsibility in many aspects of community life--by providing a set of moral values, by improving the attitude toward rural life, by encouraging better treatment of the land and neighbors, and by assisting the rural individual to develop a sound personal philosophy and spiritual foundation. The church can encourage progress towards the good life, which is now possible through the application of science, the extension of education, and the integration of religion into all activities.

The rural minister cannot be a specialist in the many phases of farming and community life. But it is desirable that he have a general understanding of what is going on locally as well as of the outside forces which affect his parish. A rural church can carry out only a few of the activities suggested in this outline. Projects to be selected depend of many factors. Physical conditions vary widely among sections of the country. The educational, social, and cultural experiences of people also vary. Therefore a church must select activities which are significant in correcting local problems. The minister may take active leadership, may work through a church committee, or may stimulate action by secular forces. Projects may be started by a church which will be continued by other agencies.

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## I. QUESTIONS ON FUNCTION AND PROCEDURE OF THE RURAL CHURCH

1. What are the functions of the church in rural life?
- 2.. Why is the church concerned about:
  - (1) Farming and family income?
  - (2) Home and family life?
  - (3) Community life?
  - (4) Values of rural life and development of a rural philosophy?
3. What should the clergyman know about farming, the family, the community, values of rural life--and where and how will he obtain information?
4. What tools are needed--materials, methods, leadership--to assist the church group in rural life activities?
  - (1) Maps of parish and community
  - (2) Survey forms and questionnaires
  - (3) Assembled facts from community and governmental sources
  - (4) Assistance from outside agencies
  - (5) Cooperation with community organizations
  - (6) Discussion group materials--methods and subject matter
  - (7) Leadership training programs
  - (8) Action project suggestions
  - (9) Facts on educational, social and cultural position of the people
5. How should the church proceed?
  - (1) Within the church group--sermon, Sunday School, committee, discussion group
  - (2) Cooperation among churches of the community
  - (3) With outside groups and agencies--assistance from, cooperation with
  - (4) Encourage, initiate, lead in action program, or promote training program
  - (5) Among the social, educational and cultural groups of the community
  - (6) With owners, tenants, share-croppers, migrants, laborers

## II. SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION BY RURAL CHURCH

### A. WHAT CAN THE RURAL CHURCH DO TO IMPROVE FARMING AND FAMILY INCOME?

Adequate family income is one of the essentials for the good life

1. Providing farms for young couples
  - Parent-children partnerships
  - Training farms for young men and women
  - Clearing house--for prospective buyers, renters, sellers, landlords
  - Parish loan plan
  - Supply of credit
  - Church homesteads
  - Church and community committee and conference
  - Retirement plan for elder farmers
  - Continuous record of land for sale
  - Information on agencies which assist

2. Security of tenure and ownership
  - Finance for farm ownership
  - Lease contracts
  - Transfer of land to farm operators
  - Landlord-tenant meetings
3. Conservation of soil and crops
  - Control of erosion--terracing, contour tillage, crop rotations, strip cropping, reforestation, permanent grasses
  - Use of green and stable manures
  - Commercial fertilizers
  - Soil Conservation districts
  - Rural zoning--county and township
  - Land use study
  - Stewardship of resources
4. Profitable enterprises
  - Crops for food, feed, cash income
  - Livestock for food, cash income
  - Farm plans--arrangement of buildings and fields, crop rotations
  - Adequate size of business for family labor, for adequate income
  - Keeping of farm records
5. Efficient farm production and marketing practices
  - Selection and treatment of seeds
  - Control of insects and disease
  - Selection and care of livestock
  - Cultivation and harvesting of crops
  - Use of labor and equipment
  - Grading of products
  - Selling in attractive form and package
  - Demonstration plot or farm
  - Lord's acre plan
6. Cooperation with neighbors
  - Use of machinery, equipment, sires, storage
  - Buying supplies for farm and family
  - Selling farm products
  - Quality program
  - Philosophy and principles of cooperation
7. Training of farmers
  - Use of educational services--state and federal agencies
  - Evening classes and short courses
  - Agriculture in schools
  - Sponsor 4-H clubs
  - Pride in agriculture and dignity of labor



8. Part-time farming for clergy  
To demonstrate methods, to supplement income, to win support
  9. Family income outside the farm  
Part-time by farm operator  
Other members of family
  10. Economic survey of community  
Farming--extent, practices, system  
Other sources of income for farm and village family  
Market outlets for products
- B. WHAT CAN THE RURAL CHURCH DO TO IMPROVE HOME AND FAMILY LIFE?
- The home and family are especially important in building the foundation of attitudes, understandings and skills for the Christian life
1. Improve family relations  
Family planning conference  
Christian family committee  
Family night at home  
Family council  
Discussions at meal--suggested topics and procedure  
Social and recreational activities--picnics, regular periods for play, games, sports, songs, stories, vacations  
Family fun project--picnics, birthdays, celebrations, visiting, trips, camping  
Counseling service  
Church family suppers and picnics  
Home and family week for community
  2. Improve housing and homes  
Home beautification project  
Construction of home furnishings  
Annual prizes for improvements of house and furnishings  
Plant flowers and shrubs program  
Home planning--arrangement, financing, construction  
Work simplification program  
Budget and records for family
  3. Raising children and youth  
Child study association  
Topics on PTA program  
Nursery for mothers who work outside house  
Discussion groups for young couples  
Courses--preparation for marriage and homemaking  
Camping program for youth--work camps  
Youth meetings in homes  
Sponsor Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts

4. Better family health
    - Health habits
    - Sanitation project
    - Diet studies
    - Family gardens
    - Use of local health facilities
    - Food preparation project
  5. Educational and cultural programs
    - Use of library facilities by family
    - Church library and distribution of publications
    - Reading lists
    - Reading habits--magazines and books
    - Radio programs--suggestions
  6. Religious foundation
    - Christian principles in daily life--discussion, reading, application
    - Religious education and worship in home
    - Christian youth program
    - Reverence of nature, the "Good Earth" attitude
  7. Survey of homes and family life
    - Conditions of homes
    - Family activities
- C. WHAT CAN THE RURAL CHURCH DO TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY LIFE?
- The church is handicapped in performing its mission in an unchristian community. The whole community is the educator, the molder of character
1. Farm organization and cooperatives
    - Membership in national and state farm organizations, and in cooperatives
    - Train children and youth in group action and cooperation
  2. Educational and cultural opportunities
    - School program to fulfill needs of children, youth and adults--  
agriculture, home economics, manual arts, music, art
    - Leadership training program--function and skills, for officers and  
committee chairmen of community organizations
    - Community library
    - Neighborhood discussion and recreation groups
    - Use of school teachers during summer on character-building programs
    - Youth counseling and guidance
    - Clubs--musical, art, drama
    - Camps for youth, adults, church groups
    - Rural service center--for distribution of materials, committee meetings



3. Health and nutrition

- Safety programs
- Group health--hospitalization, surgery, medical service
- Sanitation and disease control
- County health unit and program
- Community hospital and clinic
- Nutrition conference and program
- Use of nutrition and health services and facilities
- Prenatal and postnatal clinic

4. Avocational and recreational opportunities

- Community center and committee
- Recreational facilities--building, grounds for baseball, hobby shop
- Training leaders and counselors
- Clubs and groups--hobby clubs, competitive sports, nature study groups
- Low cost, group creation projects

5. Citizenship

- Public forums
- Discussion of election issues
- Youth citizenship project
- Use of local and county officials

6. Public and private services

- Parks, playgrounds, recreation centers
- Rural electrification
- Hard-surfaced roads
- Telephones
- Fire department
- Use of governmental services

7. Community understanding and cooperation

- Community church council, group ministry
- Community council
- Special committees--youth, communities chest, health
- Sponsor inter-group meetings--town and country, farm and business, farm and labor, inter-racial
- Community days--homecoming, picnic, exhibitions, hobby shows, 4-H Club fairs
- Beautification projects--churches, homes, farmsteads, highways
- Community score cards

8. Survey of community organizations, programs and services

- Functions and structure
- Leadership
- Constructive and destructive influences
- By a committee or council

D. WHAT CAN THE RURAL CHURCH DO TO BRING ABOUT AN APPRECIATION OF THE VALUES OF RURAL LIFE, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RURAL PHILOSOPHY?

The rural family needs much help to understand rural living and its many contributions to national life, to develop creative attitudes towards the land and neighbors, to recognize the earth as good and holy, and to obtain a vision of their place in the scheme of things beyond the understanding of man.

1. Purposes and ideologies of life
  - Objectives of the individual--the good life
  - Essential virtues and characteristics in Christian personality
  - Positive and constructive ideologies for rural life
  - Breakdown of mind set, idea of futility, fatalism
  - Religious values in processes of rural living
  - Worth of simple things, common necessities
  - Goodness of nature
  - Unity of life
2. Emphasis on value and growth of individual
  - Responsibilities, initiative, decision making--and character formation
  - Spirit of independence, self reliance, liberty-loving attitude
  - Growth and creative experiences--intellectual, scientific, spiritual, artistic
  - The human soul--significance and growth
  - On individual personality and not on wealth except as a means
  - Ideals from daily life experiences
3. Family life
  - Relationship of home and business
  - Importance of home and farm ownership
  - Contributions of children
  - Farm life and character training
  - Maturing experiences for children
  - Unity, belonging to, interdependence, loyalty, sacrifice
  - Social, recreational and spiritual life
  - Security--economic and personal
4. Group experiences
  - Neighborhood life, face-to-face contacts
  - Community experience
  - Activity in organizations
  - Opportunities for personal growth and satisfaction, and for service
  - Fellowship in family and community
  - Concern about neighborhood, mutual aid
  - Reduce educational, cultural and social differences



5. Contribution to democracy

Both individual and group experiences--compromises between  
Responsibilities of ownership, operation, management  
Individualism and cooperation--experiences  
Voluntary participation in independent groups  
Responsibilities in farm life--discipline from within  
Religious character as basis for social direction

6. Stewardship of resources

Resources

Physical--soil, timber, water, ore  
Human---personal abilities, health, time, cash  
Value of characteristics--thrift, saving, desire to improve  
Relationship of man and land--economic, moral  
Obligations to earth, to posterity  
Contribution to preservation of civilization  
Reverence of land, the earth, nature, growing things  
Significance of conserving, saving, using wisely--to self, children  
and future generations  
Ownership not absolute--a trusteeship to conserve and improve  
Community or church projects--conservation, reforestation

7. Professional attitude

Appreciation of farm life  
Pride in job, love of occupation, belief in future  
Dignity and importance of manual work--to self, society  
Combination of manual labor and intellectual effort  
Farming as a livelihood and as a way of life  
Economic and service opportunities  
Encouragement of youth--counseling

8. Cultural and recreational opportunities

Beauty of nature--change, diversity, growth  
Creative use of leisure---recreation with nature  
Health of body, mind, spirit

9. Growth and progress

Unfolding of processes of nature--flow of life  
Christian society--plan for growth  
Application of science--as a means, not an end  
Constructive and optimistic forces--trends, opportunities  
Relation of religious and material developments

10. Contributions to urban and national life
  - Population source--migration to cities
  - Attitudes, skills and understandings
  - Religious foundation--character of national policies
  - Extension of democracy--character training, experience in methods,  
understanding of philosophy, distribution of property and income
  - Understanding by rural people of national forces, trends, policies--and  
their place in scheme of things
  - Interdependence of rural and urban life--economic, moral, cultural
11. Special rural life programs
  - Rural Life Sunday
  - Harvest Festival, Thanksgiving
  - Rural life conference
  - Festivals and events of community